

**City of New Orleans, Louisiana**  
**Request for Information**  
**New Orleans Digital Equity Challenge:**  
**Promoting Digital Pathways to Opportunity**  
**February 10, 2017**

## **Challenge Summary**

The City of New Orleans seeks to connect its most vulnerable residents to economic, social, and cultural opportunities by increasing technology use among low-income residents, members of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic minorities, people living with physical or mental disabilities, children, and the elderly.

The Office of Resilience and Sustainability and the Department of Information Technology and Innovation seek creative solutions to help harness the City's diverse culture, communities, and shared experiences to introduce the target populations to technology in a non-threatening manner. Ultimately, we hope that residents will learn to use technology to advance in their professional development, economic positioning, and social networks, thereby improving individual and city resiliency.

## **Context**

Ten years' post Hurricane Katrina, the City of New Orleans launched its long-term resilience strategy, which states that "all New Orleanians should have the opportunity to gain the skills, training, education, and support needed to fully participate in our economy, prosper, and to reach their full potential."

One pathway to achieving this goal involves bridging the digital divide by equipping historically underserved residents with the technological skills and resources necessary to advance in their current careers, launch new careers, and to become more resilient members of the City. As its most disadvantaged residents become more professionally competitive, New Orleans will become more equitable, economically competitive, better positioned to prepare for and recover from crisis, and ultimately, more resilient.

However, a perception among the target population is that technology is for other people—people who are often a different race or ethnicity or people with more money and education—which often hinders efforts to address the digital divide. People who perceive technology as a tool for others are likely to be intimidated by it and may not respond well to traditional efforts to improve digital literacy such as basic computer and technology skills.

## **Description**

The digital divide—or the disparities between those who have sufficient access to technology resources and those who do not—is a major challenge which keeps many New Orleanians from achieving personal success. New Orleans proposes to tackle this issue by ensuring all residents can access 21<sup>st</sup> century technology tools, regardless of background. In a digital world, technology plays a significant role in both individual and city resilience.

Entering and participating in today's workforce requires, at minimum, basic digital skills and convenient access to technological resources. For disconnected communities, a lack of access to technology and digital education exacerbates disparate education, health, and income outcomes along racial, ethnic and socio-economic lines. These disparate outcomes make it difficult for the most motivated individuals to improve their economic and life circumstances.

## **Request for Information**

To counteract this, New Orleans seeks innovative approaches to draw target populations into programs in an approachable, familiar, and attainable way. These approaches should draw upon New Orleans' inherent assets, including:

- A long-standing culture of invention and reinvention, derived from both a desire to create and an imperative to survive.
- Cultural continuity, which New Orleanians continuously renew in daily interactions providing the city with its strength and richness, unique among American cities.
- A collective cultural memory that blends legacies of European, West African, Native American and Asian peoples and cultures.

These assets—drawn from generations of creative practice, community cohesion, and unique identity—serve as the foundation of our city resilience strategy. By combining these concepts, and in close partnership with local and community organizations, groups, and individuals, we can effectively introduce technology to target populations by using non-threatening, culturally-relevant, familiar, and appropriate practices and traditions.

## **Challenge Goals**

Successful submissions will address one or more of the following goals:

- Fosters digital skills and equity;
- Develop the ability of New Orleanians to pursue new opportunities in their professional and social lives;
- Build or enhance community cohesion and connection;
- Demonstrate strong partnerships to create a broad range of socially relevant programming that include common community and shared experiences and activities, such as music, sports and recreation, religious, cultural, educational, etc.; and
- Increase civic participation.

Responses should consider potential secondary impact to multiple visions and goals as stated in the [\*Resilient New Orleans\*](#), including, but not limited to:

### ***Adapt to Thrive***

- Advance coastal protection and restoration.
- Invest in comprehensive and innovative urban water management.
- Create a culture of environmental awareness at every stage of life.

### ***Connect to Opportunity***

- Lower barriers to workforce participation.
- Promote equitable public health outcomes.
- Build social cohesion.

### ***Transform City Systems***

- Promote sustainability as a growth strategy.
- Develop the preparedness of our businesses and neighborhoods.

## **Review Criteria**

This Request for Information is an alternative to a city procurement, in which the City first seeks information about all available solutions to a problem. In a second phase, the City might procure and implement the best-fit solution identified during the RFI through a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) or might issue additional solicitation(s), such as a Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Qualifications (RFQ).

If the City moves forward with a CEA to implement a solution(s) identified through the RFI, it will do so as a pilot project. The creators of the selected solution(s) will be invited to pilot their solution for a mutually agreed upon length of time with the possibility of a longer-term partnership if the pilot proves successful. The City will work with the selected organization(s) to determine the scope of the pilot and key performance indicators to measure the impact.

The City will use the following criteria to evaluate submitted responses:

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Promotes Equity	20/100
Engages residents in a manner comfortable to target population	20/100
Impact of Proposed Solution	20/100
Feasibility, Scalability, Replicability & Sustainability	15/100
Best Value for Resources Expended	10/100
Engages disadvantaged business enterprises	5/100
Engages local business enterprises	5/100
Innovation - Extent to which the solution is original and disruptive	5/100

## **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Cooperation Plan**

Because this project aims to introduce digital technology to marginalized residents, who are frequently members of racial, ethnic and other minority groups, the participation of local entities who understand the target population and local culture, attitudes, and traditions will be very important to the ultimate success of the project.

This RFI will require submission of a **DBE Cooperation Plan** which describes how the Responder can partner, collaborate and draw on the experience, expertise, cultural competence and social capital of local DBE organizations. The DBE Cooperation Plan will require the Responder to identify opportunities to connect DBE organizations to the proposed innovation and can include partnership, subcontracting, training and capacity building, mentoring, and relationship building activities that involve DBE organizations in the process of creating and implementing a response to this Innovation Challenge.

The City anticipates that DBE participation will not only help create a more viable technical solution by involving people with strong connections to the target populations but that it also will yield information on strategies to build the capacity of DBE organizations to participate in the digital marketplace.

Information about the DBE Program is on the Office of Supplier Diversity webpage.

<http://www.nola.gov/economic-development/supplier-diversity/>.

You also can contact them via email at [supplierdiversity@nola.gov](mailto:supplierdiversity@nola.gov).

## How to Apply

**Step One:** You must register on [Buyspeed](#) to respond to this RFI. The City uses Buyspeed to collect information from potential vendors. See the [Buyspeed Registration Instructions](#) for assistance navigating Buyspeed.. Please email [procurement@nola.gov](mailto:procurement@nola.gov) with additional questions.

**Step Two:** Interested Responders should attend the pre-submittal briefing. City staff will explain the Digital Equity Challenge. Responders will have the opportunity to ask questions. You can attend the briefing in person or online.

Pre-Submittal Briefing	
Date / Time	March 3, 2017 - 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM Central Time
Location	New Orleans City Hall 1300 Perdido Street, Suite 4 W05 New Orleans, LA 70112
Online	<b>Meeting URL</b> <a href="https://cno-webexadm01.nola.gov/orion/joinmeeting.do?ED=pcNO8J42kuJwGdlpe0rRkw==&amp;Rnd=0.12188848713345979&amp;siteurl=webexcno">https://cno-webexadm01.nola.gov/orion/joinmeeting.do?ED=pcNO8J42kuJwGdlpe0rRkw==&amp;Rnd=0.12188848713345979&amp;siteurl=webexcno</a> <b>Phone Number for Audio</b> Direct: 504-658-7001 Toll Free: 1-877-286-7156 Meeting Number: 991 866 132

**Step Three:** Complete and submit the application in [Appendix A](#) for your response.

- Response Requirements:
  - Attachments must be in portable document format (.pdf).
  - File size: 2MB maximum & 12 pages maximum
  - Send your response by email to [procurement@nola.gov](mailto:procurement@nola.gov).
  - Email subject line should be **"Promoting Digital Pathways to Opportunity – Responder Name"**.
  - Submissions must be received by **Friday, March 31, 2017 at 4:00 PM CST.**
- Responders also **may** include additional supporting graphic or visual material, if desired.

Rights and Options reserved: In addition to the rights reserved elsewhere in this RFI, the City reserves and may, in its sole discretion, exercise any or more of the following rights and options with respect to this RFI if the City determines that doing so is in the best interest of the City:

- Cancel or modify this RFI at any time at will, with or without notice. This RFI and any related discussions or evaluations by anyone create no rights or obligations whatsoever.
- If the City identifies a desirable project solution(s), it may negotiate a final agreement with the Responder(s) that created the favored project solution(s) via a contract. The City reserves the right to suggest collaboration among multiple Responders. The contract executed by the City and the selected Responder(s), if any, is the exclusive statement of rights and obligations extending from this Request for Information.

Contract: If the City finds a solution of interest and decides to move forward with implementation, the solution provider must comply with the City of New Orleans' contracting requirements. The **Additional Information** section of the [Challenge website](#) has information about the City's contracting requirements, including participation targets for local, qualified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms, and links to contracting documents.

Questions: Please see [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the [Challenge website](#). Submit additional questions or clarifications to [procurement@nola.gov](mailto:procurement@nola.gov).

## APPENDIX A

### Application template

The Review Team will evaluate each response's answers to the following questions to determine how the proposed solution will address challenge goals.

<b>1. General Information</b>	
1.1	Firm or Organization Name (if applicable)
1.2	Street Address
1.3	City, State, Zip
1.4	Website
1.5	Point of Contact
1.6	Name
1.7	Last name
1.8	Phone
1.9	Email
1.10	How would you describe your firm or organization? (size, minority or women owned business, history, etc.) <i>250 words or less.</i>

<b>2. Proposal</b>	
2.1	Title of solution/proposal:
2.2	Please describe your solution. (250 words or less)
2.3	Please describe how your solution will address the Challenge goals outlined above in the Request for Information. (250 words or less)
2.4	Please describe the estimated number of users and/or beneficiaries of your solution. (150 words or less)
2.5	Please describe short, mid, and long-term impacts or outcomes of your solution. (150 words or less)
2.6	If applicable, please describe a previous experience implementing your solution. Be sure to include location, objectives, implementation method, and impact/outcomes. If not applicable, please state why. (250 words or less).
2.7	Please describe how you would pilot your solution in New Orleans if invited. (250 words or less)
2.8	Who will work directly with members of the target populations?
2.9	Would your solution require in-kind resources ( <i>i.e.</i> , office space, travel costs, <i>etc.</i> ) from the City of New Orleans, if invited to pilot in the City? If so, please explain. (150 words or less)
2.10	Please describe financial, equipment, and labor inputs to launch a pilot of your solution, if the City invited you to pilot. (150 words or less)
2.10	Does your solution depend upon grant money from a third party? If so, please describe. (150 words or less)
2.11	Please describe the cost to implement your solution and how your solution raises funds to pay for its costs. (150 words or less)
2.12	Would you need/are you willing to partner with any other organizations or firms to implement your solution(s), if the City invited you to pilot your solution? If so, do you need support identifying potential partner organizations? (250 words or less)
2.13	Please include a <b>Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Cooperation Plan</b> that describes how you would ensure meaningful participation by DBE firms, organizations managed/operated by members of historically disadvantaged groups, and/or organizations that serve members of historically disadvantaged groups.
2.14	If you were invited to pilot your solution in New Orleans and the pilot was deemed successful, please describe how you would expand the pilot citywide in a scalable, self-sustaining manner (150 words or less).
2.15	Based on your understanding of the scope of this project, please describe what challenges or areas of concern you have? (250 words or less)



## APPENDIX B

### More Background Information

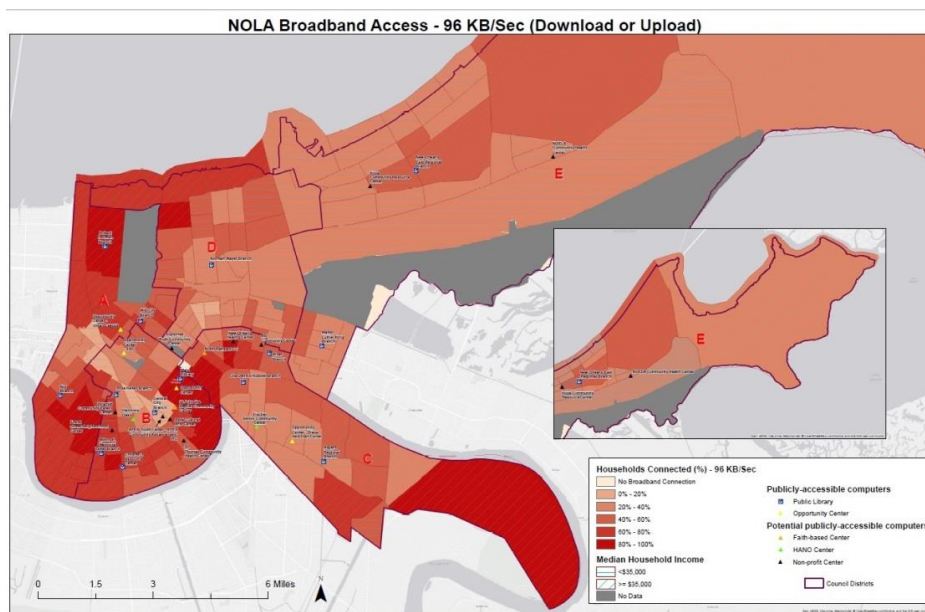
There are key long-standing barriers to equitable economic and social outcomes, perpetuating the digital divide in New Orleans. These historical barriers include:

- Perception of exclusivity of programs typically geared toward expanding opportunities in technology, including a failure to develop strategies that are approachable or relatable to target populations.
- Insufficient access to tools, service, devices, resources, or opportunities.
- Systemic biases that have contributed to inequitable social, economic, and health outcomes for minority and low-income populations.

Internet access and digital skills are essential to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Information is increasingly offered exclusively online.<sup>1</sup> Virtually all Fortune 500 firms post job openings exclusively online and require applicants to apply online.<sup>2</sup> Tasks typically performed online include:

- Purchasing bus, train, or plane tickets;
- Applying for K-12, college or graduate school;
- Applying for unemployment, food stamps, or other public benefits;
- Buying items used in daily life like clothes and food; and
- Looking for a place to live.

Approximately 33% of low income New Orleans households have internet at home. These people are likely to be members of racial or ethnic minority groups, immigrants, and to live in under-resourced neighborhoods. By comparison, virtually all New Orleans wealthiest residents have internet at home.



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ntia.doc.gov/files/ntia/publications/ntia\\_internet\\_use\\_report\\_february\\_2011.pdf](https://www.ntia.doc.gov/files/ntia/publications/ntia_internet_use_report_february_2011.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Julius Genachowski, FCC Chairman, Remarks at Comcast Internet Essentials Event sponsored by Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Washington, DC, September 24, 2012.